



The Treasury of Lives

Phonetic Romanization of the Tibetan Language Principles of Practice

These principles are guidelines based on the understanding that the primary purpose of such a standard word list for Tibetan terms is to capture common usages and intuitive spellings in the English language; a secondary use is to increase the searchability of such terms in online resources. These principles are not scientifically based on a linguistic formula for phoneticizing the Tibetan language (for an example of that approach see [THL Simplified Phonetic Transcription of Standard Tibetan](#)). Ease of use and acceptance of established conventions weigh equal to consistency. This document is revised as needed and is subject to change.

Phonetic Principles

1. Use the Roman alphabet to phonetically represent the Tibetan language.
2. Spellings are easy to be pronounced by international English language readers.
3. No diacritic marks are employed to represent Tibetan sounds.
4. Sanskrit words should contain proper diacritics.
5. Reflect the Wylie transliteration whenever possible.
6. Spellings are to be consistent and simple.
7. Proper person and place names are capitalized following common English standards.
8. Hyphens are never used.
9. In certain instances, phonetic renderings are to be based on common usage. If a Tibetan word has precedent through its popular usage in English-language print, that popular usage can replace an expected phonetic spelling based on the principles outlined in this document.
10. Tibetan Sanskritized names are spelled in their Sanskrit forms, with diacritics, to best reflect the intent of the Tibetan scribe. Thus: Vairocana, Tāranātha, and Shākyā Shrī.
11. Bhutanese, Sikkimese, and Ladakhi phonetic renderings reflect local pronunciation or popular use.



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Phonetic Transcription of Vowels

Tibetan Script	Wylie	Treasury Phonetic
ཀྱི	ki	ki
ཀུ	ku	ku
ཀེ	ke	ke
ཀོ	ko	ko

Phonetic Transcription of Consonants

Tibetan Script	Wylie	Treasury Phonetic
ཀ	k	k
ཁ	kh	kh
ག	g	g
ང	ng	ng
ཅ	c	ch
ཆ	ch	ch
ཇ	j	j
ཉ	ny	ny
ཏ	t	t
ཐ	th	t
ད	d	d
ན	n	n

Tibetan Script	Wylie	Treasury Phonetic
ཀྱི	ky	ky
ཁྱི	khy	khy
གྱི	gy	gy
པྱི	py	ch
ཕྱི	phy	ch
བྱི	by	j
མྱི	my	ny
ཀྱེ	kr	tr
ཁྱེ	khr	tr
གྱེ	gr	dr
དྱེ	tr	tr
བྱེ	thr	tr



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པ	p	p
ཕ	ph	p
བ	b	b
མ	m	m
ཅ	ts	ts
ཅཱ	tsh	ts
ཇ	dz	dz
ཡ	w	w
ཞ	zh	zh
ཟ	z	z
འ	'	[nil]
ཡ	y	y
ར	r	r
ལ	l	l
ཤ	sh	sh
ས	s	s
ཧ	h	h
ཨ	a	a

ཏ	dr	dr
ཏྱ	nr	n
ཏྲ	pr	tr
ཏླ	phr	tr
ཏྤ	br	dr
ཏྥ	mr	m
ཏྦ	shr	shr
ཏྦྷ	sr	s
ཏྨ	hr	hr
ཏྩ	kl	l
ཏྪ	khl	l
ཏྫ	bl	l
ཏྫྷ	zl	d
ཏྭ	rl	l
ཏྮ	sl	l
ཏྯ	'o	wo
ཏྰ	'od	wo
ཏྱ	'	[nil]



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Changes from Wylie to Phonetic

Wylie	Treasury Phonetic
c	ch
th	t
ph	p
tsh	ts
py	ch
phy	ch
by	j
my	ny
kr	tr
chr	tr
gr	dr
thr	tr
nr	n
pr	tr
phr	tr
br	dr
mr	m
sr	s
kl	l
khl	l
bla	l
zla	d
rla	l
sla	l



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'o	wo
'od	wo
'	nil (unless it precedes another syllable, in which case it is inflected by the prefix of the following syllable)

Principles in Practice

1. An “a” before “l”, “d” and “n” suffix is represented with an “e”.

Examples:

dpal ldan = pelden
ral pa can = relpachen
thub bstan = tubten

Exceptions:

dpal sprul = Patrul (NOT Peltrul)

2. If “ga” is the final letter in a syllable, it is represented with a “k”.

Example:

dwags po = dakpo
chos grags = chodrak
dge lugs = Geluk
phug = puk
phag = pak

Exceptions:

'jigs med = Jigme
rig pa = rigpa
rig 'dzin = rigzin



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spyang ras gzigs = Chenrezig
rdzogs chen = dzogchen

3. Suffix “ba” is “b”

Example:

grub chen = drubchen

4. Final syllable “ba” and “bo” become “wa” and “wo”. First syllables remain “ba” etc.

Examples:

gsang ba = sangwa

jo bo = Jowo

5. Syllables py, phy, by are ch, ch, j

Examples:

spyang ras gzigs = Chenrezi

sbyin dag = jindak

6. Syllable “my” is “ny”

Examples:

smyong = nyong

7. Syllables with “r” subscripts:

kr = tr

khr = tr

pr = tr

phr = tr



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tr = tr
thr = tr
gr = dr
br = dr
dr = dr

Examples:

sgrol ma = Drolma
'bras spungs = Drepung
'phrin las = Trinle

Exception:

sprul sku = tulku

8. Syllable “zla” is “da”

Example:

zla ba = dawa

9. Double consonants are kept.

Examples:

gzhon nu = zhonnu
sang s rgyas = sanggye
seng ge = sengge

10. If the Wylie is “z”, then apply a “z”; if the Wylie is “zh”, then apply a “zh”.

Example:

bzang po = Zangpo
kun bzang = Kunzang
blo bzang = Lobzang
gzhan stong = zhentong



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Exception:

zhe chen = Shechen

11. Words that end in “e” or “as” are represented with “e”.

Examples:

rdo rje = dorje

gu ge = Guge

rin po che = rinpoche

'phrin las = Trinle

Exceptions are single-syllable names:

Dbas = Wey

Gnas dgon = Ney Monastery

12. When an *achung* is inflected with a vowel marker, the phonetic is given as a double vowel.

Examples:

byi'u = jiu

be'u = beu

ga'o = gao

rig pa'i = rigpai

13. The letter *achung* is generally silent, unless it is the prefix of a secondary syllable in a word; it is then represented with an “n”.

Examples:

bka' 'gyur = kangyur

14. The prefixes *m* and *b* on the second syllable are sometimes pronounced.



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Examples:

blo bzang = Lobzang

a mdo = Amdo

15. Place names ending in -gling are rendered as two words.

Examples:

bshad sgrub gling = Shedrub Ling

phun tshogs gling = Puntsok Ling

bsam 'grub gling = Samdrub Ling

chos 'khor gling = Chokhor Ling

Exceptions:

chos gling = Choling

nor bu gling ka = Norbulingka

smin 'grol gling = Mindroling

16. Standard Usage for Personal and Place Names. Particularly with regards to proper names, phonetic renderings in select cases are to be based on established common usage, or in accordance with how individual Tibetans render their own names in English publications. Bhutanese and Ladakhi names follow local conventions for spelling in English.

Examples:

Bstan 'dzin = Tenzin

Rig 'dzin = Rigzin

Jigs med = Jigme

Stag brag = Taktra

Sde dge = Derge

Chab mdo = Chamdo



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Note that The Treasury of Lives employs multiple phonetic variants for proper names to increase search results. These are not displayed.

Examples:

Thar pa gling = Tharpaling (monastery in Bhutan)

Bsam bstan gling = Samstanling (monastery in Ladakh)

Thub bstan mchog nor = Thubstan Choknor (Nineteenth Bakula Rinpoche)

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